



Portland Selects Five Brownfields For Redevelopment

Portland, OR

After extensive work with the community to identify potential brownfields sites, the City of Portland, Oregon selected five sites for cleanup and redevelopment. The selection of these sites was one of the first steps toward redevelopment efforts that had been underway from the time of the city's EPA Showcase Community designation in 1998.

Showcase Communities are selected by the Brownfields National Partnership to demonstrate that through cooperation, federal, state, local, and private efforts can be concentrated around brownfields to restore these sites, stimulate economic development, and revitalize communities. Showcase Communities serve as models for broad-based cooperative efforts to support locally based initiatives. Showcases receive up to \$400,000 from EPA for both environmental assessments and to support the loan of a federal employee to the Showcase for up to three years. Showcase Communities receive additional financial and technical support from the Partnership's more than 20 federal partners, depending on the community need and program eligibility.

Following the Showcase Community designation, the Portland Brownfield Showcase Policy Committee was formed, a 20-member board that includes stakeholders from throughout the city representing diverse interests in redevelopment. Committee members include local government representatives, community outreach specialists, the director of the Portland Urban League, and the director of the Environmental Justice Action Group. The city has also made community outreach efforts a top priority in implementing its Showcase Communities grant, doing its best to keep citizens from low-income neighborhoods involved in brownfields reuse decisions. A separate Showcase Community Steering Committee was formed that includes representatives from neighborhoods in the northeastern area of the city affected by brownfields. Neighborhood meetings and Brownfields Showcase Community workshops also helped to keep citizens involved.

One of the five brownfields selected by the city for redevelopment is a former battery recycling facility that sat vacant for a number of years with unknown levels of lead contamination. The site was chosen as the new location of the Port City Development Center, a nonprofit organization that provides training for developmentally challenged individuals. Removal of lead contamination from the site is now complete. When redevelopment is finished, this new center will provide services in the areas of job training, work placement, art programs, and residential living skills to those with developmental disabilities.

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One of Portland's brownfields targeted for redevelopment (right side of picture).

JUST THE FACTS:

- The Portland Brownfield Showcase Policy Committee is a 20-member board that includes stakeholders from throughout the city representing diverse interests in redevelopment.
- One of the city's brownfields projects, a former gas station that became a 5,000-square-foot office building, received a "Business for an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow" award.
- Another brownfield targeted by the city for redevelopment will eventually become a community-funded and -maintained recreation area for local residents to enjoy.

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Though preliminary assessments of the former battery recycling site had been performed, a final assessment was funded by EPA's Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot grant (which preceded the Showcase designation). Along the way, Showcase Community staff provided technical assistance to the site's owner. Multnomah County issued a \$2 million bond to fund site improvements, and the McCarthy Building Company has to date donated more than \$50,000 in construction services toward completion of the project.

Another of the five targeted brownfields is a former gas station that has been redeveloped into a 5,000-square-foot office building. The site's transformation was recognized by the city with a "Business for an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow" (BEST) award. The owners are currently in the process of obtaining a No Further Action (NFA) letter from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ). The site is now occupied by a coffee shop and an historic restoration contractor, and additional office space is available for lease.

ODEQ has issued an NFA letter to another of Portland's five targeted brownfields, the Delta Sigma site, also a former gas station. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a community-based nonprofit organization, plans to develop the site into senior housing and space for retail, community services, and senior daycare. The sorority participated in the Development Opportunities Strategy (DOS) program, which assists property owners, tenants, and developers in evaluating project feasibility by providing funding and real estate development expertise. Based on DOS recommendations, the sorority is looking for funding to enable the project's completion.

Another brownfield targeted by the city for redevelopment is a site that will eventually become a community-funded and -maintained recreation area for local residents to enjoy. "These projects are what make the Showcase project worthwhile," remarked Portland's Mayor, Vera Katz, who also serves as co-chair of the Brownfields Showcase Policy Committee. "There are a number of small sites in North and Northeast that have stayed vacant and neglected for too long. But now, we have the opportunity to help redevelop the lots, and hopefully serve as a catalyst that will bring new jobs and new life to the neighborhood."

One of the community outreach programs developed following the Showcase Community designation is the North/Northeast Brownfields Community Advisory Committee (CAC). This committee has been key in encouraging citizen involvement in Portland's brownfields efforts through outreach, education, and public meetings. The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon, which also received an EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot in 1998, used the CAC to help identify sites to be assessed under its own Pilot program. Portland Commissioner Charlie Hales acknowledges its importance: "It's great to see the community forming partnerships to return abandoned and polluted sites to productive use. No neighborhood should be left on its own to cope with the consequences of a polluter's mess." Portland's community-based decision-making process has been so successful that CAC members have been invited to present at several conferences nationwide. As CAC Chair Warren Fluker stated, "Through the combined efforts of the CAC and our local government partners, we have made several solid gains and produced a model of citizen involvement. We know we are headed in a positive direction."

Portland's Brownfield Showcase Program (PBS) continues its pursuit of urban revitalization. In May 2002, EPA awarded Portland's Brownfields Assessment Pilot \$200,000 in supplemental funding for environmental site assessments and cleanup planning in the North Macadam district, a 130-acre riverfront property historically used for industrial purposes. PBS also continues to work with the North/Northeast Portland community on education, assessment, and resource development regarding the city's brownfields.

CONTACTS:

For more information on EPA's Showcase Communities, contact Tony Raia of OSWER's Office of Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment at (202) 566-2758

Or visit EPA's Brownfields Web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>